

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 10827 301556Z
ACTION AF-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 10827

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, NI, SHUM
SUBJECT: CA LEADERS PRESENT NEW CONSTITUTION TO OBASANJO

REF: (A) LAGOS 10278 (B) LAGOS 6975

1. ON AUGUST 29 IN A CEREMONY AT DODAN BARRACKS, CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CA) DEPUTY CHAIRMAN JUSTICE BUBA ARDO AND SECRETARY ALHAJI GIDADO IDRIS FORMALLY PRESENTED CLEAN COPIES OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION TO FMG HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO. THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN AND SECRETARY WERE ACTING IN THE ABSENCE OF CHAIRMAN UDOMA WHO IS STILL RECEIVING MEDICAL TREATMENT IN EUROPE.

2. IN ACCEPTING THE CONSTITUTION, OBASANJO EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE CA'S EFFORTS. HE ADDED THAT WITH THE FORMAL PRESENTATION OF THE CLEAN DRAFT "ANOTHER CONCRETE STEP HAD BEEN TAKEN IN THE PLANNED PROCESS OF MILITARY DIS-ENGAGEMENT." OBASANJO APPEALED TO ALL NIGERIANS TO ABIDE BY THE RULES OF DEMOCRACY. "TO DO OTHERWISE IS TO EXTEND AN OPEN INVITATION TO ANARCHY AT THE EXPENSE OF SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY AND HENCE, THE VERY SURVIVAL OF THE NATION."

3. ON THE CONTROVERSIES WHICH HAD OFTEN ROCKED THE CA, THE HEAD OF STATE NOTED:

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-- TRUE ENOUGH, YOUR DELIBERATIONS WERE PUNCTUATED BY MOMENTS OF STRAINS AND STRESSES. THIS IS TO BE EXPECTED CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IS ONLY A MICROCOSM OF THE LARGER NIGERIAN SOCIETY REFLECTING AS IT WERE, ITS DIVERSITY OF CULTURE, RELIGIONS, BELIEVES, OPINIONS, OCCUPATIONS AND PRE-OCCUPATIONS.

OBASANJO HAD SPECIAL WORDS OF PRAISE FOR CHAIRMAN UDOMA,
"I AM SATISFIED THAT WHERE THE CHAIRMAN HAD OCCASION TO BE
FIRM, HE WAS TOLD SOLELY IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CONSTITUTION
AND THE NATION."

4. HOWEVER, IN LINE WITH THE CA'S POLITICAL DIVISIONS, SIXTEEN
CA MEMBERS FROM KANO STATE WROTE TO OBASANJO URGING HIM NOT TO
ACCEPT THE CONSTITUTION. ACCORDING TO SPOKESMAN ALHAJI ABUBAKAR
RIMI, THE KANO MCAS FELT THAT THE CONSTITUTION DID NOT REFLECT
THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE IN NIGERIA, I.E., SHARIA. RIMI
ASSERTED THAT THE CA SECRETARIAT HAD "USURPED" THE POWERS OF
THE ASSEMBLY AND ADDED, "WE SINCERELY HOPE THAT EXCELLENCE AND
FAIR PLAY WILL NOT BE SACRIFICED FOR CONVENIENCE. WHAT IS WORTH
DOING, IS WORTH DOING WELL."

5. COMMENT: DESPITE THE ECHOES OF PREVIOUS DISCONTENTS, IT APPEARS
THAT THE COUNTRY HAS CROSSED ANOTHER HURDLE ON THE ROAD
TO CIVILIAN RULE. AFTER THE ABRUP ADJOURNMENT OF THE CA ON JUNE
5, IT WAS CLEAR THAT ADDITIONAL DELIBERATIONS COULD ONLY POISON
FURTHER THE POLITICAL WELL. WE UNDERSTAND FROM OUR SOURCES IN
THE CA ADMINISTRATION STRUCTURE THAT MCAS ADDED VERY LITTLE IN
THE WAY OF WRITTEN COMMENTS AND CORRECTIONS TO BE CLEAN DRAFTS
WHICH WERE DISTRIBUTED TO THEM BY THE SECRETARIAT. THUS, THE
WAY WAS CLEAR FOR A FORMAL PRESENTATION OF THE TEXT TO THE FMG.
IN THAT REGARD, WE UNDERSTAND THAT GIDADO IDRIS HAND-CARRIED
COPIES TO EUROPE LAST WEEK TO OBTAIN UDOMA'S SIGNATURE IN
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PREPARATION FOR YESTERDAY'S CEREMONY. THE NEXT STEP WOULD APPEAR
TO BE THE CONSIDERATION OF THE TEXT BY THE FMG AND ITS PROMUL-
GATION WITH OR WITHOUT CHANGES FROM DODAN BARRACKS.
LEWIS

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NNN

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